

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 HA-05 AID-05 PC-01 SY-05 CIAE-00
PM-05 H-01 INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 PA-01 SP-02 SS-15
NSCE-00 SSO-00 ICAE-00 INRE-00 MCT-02 A-01 CCO-00
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O R 2122220Z JUL 78
FM AMEMBASSY LA PAZ
TO SECSTATE WASHDC NIACT IMMEDIATE 1768
INFO AMEMBASSY LIMA
AMEMBASSY QUITO
AMEMBASSY SANTIAGO
DIA WASHDC
USCINCSO J2 QUARRY HEIGHTS CZ

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1. AS OF 1700 HOURS ON JULY 21, THE SITUATION IN BOLIVIA REMAINS
UNCLEAR. PRO-PEREDA FORCES APPEAR TO BE IN POLITICAL CONTROL OF
SANTA CRUZ AND THERE ARE UNCONFIRMED REPORTS THAT THEY ALSO
HOLD SWAY IN COCHABAMBA, BENI, PANDO AND TARIJA. THEY ARE
DEMANDING THAT PEREDA BE INSTALLED AS PRESIDENT; AT LEAST SOME
OF THE PRO-PEREDA GROUPS ARE ALSO CALLING FOR THE EXPULSION
OF HERNAN SILEX FROM THE COUNTRY.

2. PRECISELY WHAT ROLE PEREDA IS PLAYING IN ALL THIS IS ALSO
UNCLEAR. TI IS OUR UNDERSTANDING THAT HE DEPARTED FOR
COCHABAMBA AND SANTA CRUZ ON JULY 19 TO TRY TO CONVINCE HIS
SUPPORTERS TO DROP THEIR DEMANDS AND ABIDE BY THE DECISION OF
THE ELECTORAL COURT ANNULING THE ELECTIONS. THERE IS
SPECULATION, HOWEVER,
THAT HE MAY NOW HAVE CHANGED HIS POSITION. WE HAVE BEEN
INFORMED THAT PEREDA CONTACTED BANZER THROUGH AN INTERMEDIARY
DURING THE EARLY MORNING HOURS OF JULY 21 AND SAID THAT HE WAS
DISPOSED TO "NEGOTIATE"--ALTHOUGH FOR WHAT, OR ON WHAT BASIS,
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IS UNKNOWN. BANZER RESPONDED BY SENDING AGRICULTURE MINISTER
COLONEL NATUSCH BUSCH AND EDUCATION MINISTER COLONEL NINO GUZMAN
BY PLANE TO SANTA CRUZ TO SEE WHAT COULD BE DONE. THE TWO MINISTERS
HAVE RETURNED TO LA PAZ AND ARE NOW MEETING WITH PRESIDENT BANZER.

3. SHORTLY AFTER MID-DAY PRESIDENT BANZER MADE A NATIONAL

RADIO ADDRESS. PART OF THE ADDRESS WAS POINTEDLY AIMED AT HIS NATIVE TOWN OF SANTA CRUZ. IN CONCILIATORY TONES HE CALLED FOR UNITY, BUT MAINTAINED STOUTLY THAT HE WAS COMMITTED TO DEFEND THE GOVERNMENT OF THE ARMED FORCES.

4. THE PRO-PEREDA FORCES HAVE BEEN BUTTRESSED BY VIRTUALLY THE ENTIRE BOLIVIAN AIR FORCE AND WE UNDERSTAND THAT ALL FLYABLE MILITARY AIRCRAFT HAVE DEPARTED LA PAZ FOR SANTA CRUZ. SOME ARMY UNITS, INCLUDING THOSE IN ROBORE AND YACUIBA IN THE DEPARTMENT OF SANTA CRUZ, HAVE REPORTEDLY DECLARED THEMSELVES IN FAVOR OF A PEREDA PRESIDENCY. IN COCHABAMBA, HOWEVER, THE ARMY HAS STAYED NEUTRAL. CIVILIAN GROUPS HAVE COMMANDEERED COCHABAMBA RADIO STATIONS AND THE TWO DAILY NEWSPAPERS. THE LOCAL UNIVERSITY (WHICH HAD BEEN CLOSED) HAS BEEN OCCUPIED BY PEREDA PEOPLE, WHILE PRO-PEREDA PEASANT GROUPS REPORTEDLY THREW UP ROADBLOCKS ON THE ROAD TO THE TROPICAL CHAPARE REGION. DESPITE THESE OCCURRENCES, THE US CONSULAR AGENT IN COCHABAMBA REPORTS THAT THE SITUATION HAS BEEN CALM, WITH APPROXIMATELY 80 PERCENT OF THE BUSINESSES OPERATING NORMALLY.

4. THE ATMOSPHERE IN LA PAZ HAS ALSO BEEN GENERALLY CALM, WITH ONLY ISOLATED INCIDENTS OF VIOLENCE. A BOMB EXPLODED IN THE INTERNAL REVENUE OFFICE AT ABOUT 2:30 A.M. ON JULY 20; ANOTHER WENT OFF AT A POLICE TRANSIT BOX IN THE EARLY MORNING OF JULY 21. THE BOMBS CAUSED PROPERTY DAMAGE, BUT NO INJURIES. THERE IS AN UNSUBSTANTIATED REPORT OF A KIDNAPPING IN CALACOTO, ALLEGEDLY CARRIED OUT BY MNRI ADHERENTS.

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THUS FAR, HOWEVER, WE HAVE HEARD NO REPORTS OF SERIOUS INJURIES OR DEATHS IN LA PAZ OR ELSEWHERE IN BOLIVIA. THE SITUATION REMAINS BASICALLY CALM THROUGHOUT THE COUNTRY AND A 10:00 P.M. TO 6:00 AM. CURFEW WILL CONTRIBUTE TO CONTINUATION OF THIS STATE. THERE REMAINS A HIGH LEVEL OF EXPECTANCY AND TENSION AS ALL EYES ARE ON THE ARMED FORCES, WHOSE QUARRELS AND DIVISIONS ARE THE HEART OF THE CURRENT PROBLEM.

BOEKER

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*** Current Handling Restrictions *** n/a

*** Current Classification *** LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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